



February 19, 2013

**Written testimony of The New Haven Mental Health Outreach for MotherS (MOMS) Partnership**

To The Appropriations Committee

Regarding the **Governor's Bill No. 6354 section 90**: The establishment of a Commission on Citizen Advocacy.

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Greeting Senator Harp, Representative Walker, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, this testimony is submitted on behalf of the New Haven MOMS Partnership, in in opposition to the Governor's proposal to consolidate the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women with other legislative commissions into **one** single agency, The Commission on Citizen Advocacy.

**New Haven Moms**, a community-academic partnership that focuses on improving the wellbeing of families - the first of its kind - is made of up 8 community based service providers, local and state government agencies, and Yale University. We care very deeply about the complex challenges mothers everywhere face as they strive to raise children. In New Haven, we have heard from over 1,000 mothers that these challenges most commonly involve: (1) their ability to meet their family's basic needs; (2) stress, and (3) social isolation.

In New Haven, specifically, more than a third of children are raised by a single mother, thus in the MOMS Partnership, our work focuses specifically on mothers as a means to ensuring optimal health and development for families. Therefore, we would oppose any legislation that would overlook the specialized needs of women.

Specifically, years of research nationally and internationally as well as with women in Connecticut tells us the following:

1. Women are at highest risk for depressive and anxiety disorders during their childbearing years.
2. Those risk factors include low-income, single marital status, adolescent parenting,
3. Low-income, minority women are less likely to obtain mental health care

These risk factors are intrinsically related to equal treatment, employment and placement of women, all factors addressed by the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women.

The PCSW is Connecticut's premier women's public policy commissions in the country. For 40 years, the PCSW has been a voice for women's issues, concerns and needs. The PCSW is a watchdog on issues critical to/for women.

- a. They hold State government accountable;
- b. They analyze how State policies affect – or do not affect – women and families, and;
- c. They serve as a check-and-balance system that is critical to government integrity.

A merger falsely assumes that all disenfranchised voices and matters are the same and is a distraction from the critical work that needs to get done and decisions that need to be made.

Women are the only majority (51% of population) consistently treated as a minority. It is dangerous to assume the issues of women, blacks, Latinos, children and LGBT people are the same, or that discrimination against these groups manifests in the same ways, or that the remedies are the same.

The New Haven MOMS partnership stands with the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women in matters concerning informed public policy, bill monitoring and other system wide recommendations now and for future solvency and well-being of women in Connecticut who work, pay taxes, raise families and vote in Connecticut.

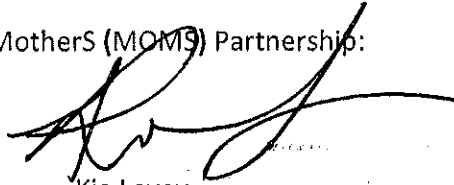
Respectfully Submitted by,

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